



## **Flood Information for Homeowners and Renters: Ensuring the Safety of Your Home or Building**

If your apartment or home has suffered flood damage, you may have questions about whether it is safe for you or your loved ones to return home. There are steps you can take to help ensure the environmental health and safety of your home.

### **Structural Damage**

Floods can cause structural damage to homes. Signs of structural damage include buckling along ceilings and walls and water seeping underneath sinks, toilets, or floor tiles. If you suspect structural damage in your home, you can call a building inspector to come and look at your property. (If you rent, you should call your landlord first, but renters can also call building inspectors directly). In Rhode Island, cities and towns employ building inspectors. The Department of Health does not have jurisdiction and cannot assess damages on safety issues. Call your city or town hall for contact information for local building inspectors.

### **Air Quality and Mold**

Excess moisture from flooding can cause mold to grow, which can affect the air quality inside your home or building. You can pay a private company to test your air quality, but this can be very costly. Home improvement stores sell inexpensive mold test kits. However, testing is unnecessary if you can see or smell mold.

If you can see or smell mold, it is present and must be cleaned up. Mold growth often looks like spots. It can be many colors (white, orange, green, or black), and it usually smells musty. For more information on identifying and safely cleaning up mold, see <http://www.health.ri.gov/brochures/SomeFactsAboutMold.pdf>.

### **Disaster Recovery Centers**

The Federal and Rhode Island Emergency Management Agencies have opened Disaster Recovery Centers (DRCs) in Cranston and Warwick for Rhode Islanders to get face-to-face assistance from disaster specialists. Before visiting a DRC, people are encouraged to register for disaster assistance online at [www.DisasterAssistance.gov](http://www.DisasterAssistance.gov) or by calling 800-621-FEMA (3362), (TTY) 800-462-7585. The numbers are available seven days a week, 7 a.m. to 1 a.m. EST. Help in languages other than English is available. The centers are provided for those who want to speak in person with a disaster recovery specialist or who need help registering for disaster assistance. For more information about DRCs, including hours of operation and addresses, see <http://www.fema.gov/news/newsrelease.fema?id=50739>.

### **For More Information**

- For general flood safety precautions and information on safely re-entering your home or building after a flood, see <http://www.health.ri.gov/emergency/flooding/response/index.php>.
- For information on safely cleaning your home or building after flooding, see <http://www.health.ri.gov/emergency/flooding/about/cleaning/>.
- For information on testing the water in private wells that may have been flooded, see <http://www.health.ri.gov/emergency/flooding/about/drinkingwater/>.

See the state's flood website ([www.floodrecovery.ri.gov](http://www.floodrecovery.ri.gov)) or HEALTH's website ([www.health.ri.gov](http://www.health.ri.gov)) for additional health and safety guidance related to flooding. For more information or questions, call 222-5960/RI Relay 711.